(b) whether it is also a fact that no action has been taken against any official;

(c) if not, the details of the enquiry held and action taken.

(d) whether the officers who held enquiry were the competent authority; and

(e) if not, the reasons for not taking action against the persons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A Departmental Court of Inquiry was ordered. Six Government officials were found responsible for the lapses. Disciplinary cases against two subordinate officials were finalised and penalties awarded. Further another was issued recordable warning while another was reprimanded. In the case of remaining two officials inquiry proceedings are in progress.

(d) and (e) Do not arise in view of (b) and (c)

Raising of retirement age of Armed Forces personnel

1097. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey or opinion poll has been made amongst Armed Forces personnel with regard to raising of retirement age whereby over 9-lakh Army jawans have indicated their option for going without at two year service extension; and

(b) if so, what decisions have been taken by Government in the light thereof, including that in respect of Army Medical Corps?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Strengthening of defence system

1098. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken fresh initiatives to strengthen defence system through upgradation of technology/joint ventures/import of latest equipment/systems from friendly countries like Russia and France;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals finalised/under consideration and financial implications thereof; and

(c) details of plans formulated and strategies worked out to make defence wings self-reliant and modern for the current year and Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Strengthening the defence preparedness of the country is an on-going process involving the optimal utilisation of the human and material resources of the armed forces, defence research and development, indigenisation and self-reliance and defence cooperation with friendly countries. This is carried out within the allocated budgetary funds for the Ministry of Defence.

(c) The ten-year national mission for enhancing self-reliance in defence systems has been launched in 1995 to increase the indigenous content in annual defence acquisitions from 30% to 70%. This objective is projected to be achieved by the year 2005.

Crash of fighter planes

1099. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of fighter planes crashed during the last five years, category-wise;

(b) whether any study has been done to know the reasons therefor; and